

**James Madison to James Monroe, November 29,
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TO JAMES MONROE. MAD. MSS.

Montpellier, Novr 29, 1817.

Dear Sir, —Your favor of the 24th. has just been recd. I am fully aware of the load of business on your hands preparatory to the meeting of Congress. The course you mean to take in relation to Roads & Canals, appears to be best adapted to the posture in which you find the case. A reluctance has generally been felt to include amendments to the Constitution among Executive recommendations to Congs. but it seems to be called for on the present occasion as preferable to arresting their deliberations, by a notice though the result will be negatived, or to meeting the result with an unexpected negative. For myself, I had not supposed that my view¹ of the Constitution could have been unknown, and I felt with great force the delicacy of giving intimations of it, to be used as a bar or a clog to a depending measure.

1 See Hamilton's corresponding opinion in his Arg. for the Bank power, published in his works in 3 vols.—(*Madison's Note*.)

The *expediency of vesting in Congs* a power as to roads & Canals I have never doubted, and there has never been a moment when such a proposition to the States was so likely to be approved. A *general* power to establish Seminaries, being less obvious and affecting more the equilibrium of influence between the National & State Govts. is a more critical experiment. The feelings awakened by the proposed University within the Congressional

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District, are a proof of the opposition which may be looked for. I should consider it as at least essential that the two propositions

whatever may be the modification of the latter shd. be so distinct, that the rejection of the one by the States should not be inconsistent with the adoption of the other.

It is very grateful to have such an overflowing Treasury, especially when every other nation is on the brink, if not in the abyss of bankruptcy. A natural effect is, the prevailing desire that the taxes may be reduced, particularly the internal taxes which are most seen & felt. May it not however deserve consideration whether the Still tax which is a moralizing as well as a very easy, productive tax wd. not be advantageously retained, even at the expence of revenue from foreign trade. Why not press on the Whisky drinkers rather than the Tea & Coffee drinkers, or the drinkers of the lighter kinds of Wine. The question will depend much I am aware on the public opinion and on the expence of collecting a solitary internal tax, both of which points will be better understood in the Cabinet than they can be by the fireside, and in the result there I shall rest with perfect confidence. I make the same remark with respect to the influence which the disbanding at this moment of a conspicuous portion of our fiscal strength may have on the calculations of any other power, particularly Spain.

Health & prosperity.